

Want to give better customer service? Try these.

1. When meeting a customer, start off with eye contact, a smile, and a friendly greeting.
2. Listen carefully to the customer's request and ask questions until you know exactly what the problem is. Respond in a clear manner.
3. Treat each person as an individual so they won't feel like a number.
4. Show customers that you appreciate their business and that they are important.
5. Develop a good understanding of your responsibility so you can help your customers.
6. Handle irate customers with extra consideration and politeness. If you feel you're not making progress, pass them on to a more senior person.
7. Listen carefully to complaints. Let them get it off their chest. The average outburst lasts about two minutes. It's important to keep a level tone of voice when addressing the customer after he or she cools down a bit. Keep cool and diplomatically explain the situation. It's difficult to avoid getting angry under these circumstances, but it's essential to remain calm. Try to remember that the customer acts differently when not angry.
8. Be empathetic. Put yourself in the customer's place. Don't, however, waste time apologizing and making excuses. Most customers want understanding and action—not lame explanations of what happened.
9. Explain what you can do to help. If you need to refer the problem to someone else, introduce the customer to that person and explain the situation.
10. Follow through. If you referred the customer to someone else, check to see that appropriate action was taken. Don't let a customer fall through the cracks in communication.



One of K-mart's 10 commandments for better customer relations says to be alert for a chance to give customer service, because what counts most in life is what we do for others.

pression and helps the consumer form their opinion of that particular business establishment.

Kiraly says that employee recognition awards are given each month to one full time and one part time employee who are chosen as "Employees of the Month." The company feels that employees make that extra effort to give

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customers friendly and helpful service deserve a pat on the back. Therefore, time off with pay is given as the company's way of saying thanks for helping to make K-mart the friendliest store in town.

The following K-mart employees have been chosen as employee of the month during last year's cam-

paign and had this to say about how they treat their customers:

Terri McMeeken, K-mart 4170, Rapid City, South Dakota: "If the customers are looking for a certain item, I try to help them find it. If they can't find exactly what they want, then I try to suggest a possible substitute, something that is similar to what they are looking for. If I can't please them that way, then I take their name and phone number and tell them that we will give them a call when the next shipment of merchandise comes in."

Darlene Blankenship, K-mart 7135, Medina, Ohio: "I work in the toy department so I try to keep it as clean and neat as possible. If someone is looking for a certain thing, I'll help them look. A lot of the same people come in to shop and I know their faces and say hi."

Vera Paynter, K-mart 9548, Henderson, North Carolina, was voted friendliest full-time employee of 1983 at her store: "I try to be friendly and to help out and find what the people want. I'll help them get things so they don't have to go hunting around the store. I feel good about my job and working for K-mart. It's nice working here. I feel like

this is a family to me." Although hosiery is her department, Vera many times works the service desk. "The service desk can be real hectic sometimes, but I just try to take one thing at a time. I find out what the customer wants and deal with it slow and easy, one thing at a time. I try to help them out."

Charlene Hanford, K-mart 9548, Henderson, North Carolina, was chosen as the friendliest part-time employee of 1983 at her store. "To keep the customers happy, I smile a lot. I treat them just like I would like to be treated as a customer. You get to know a lot of your regular customers and when you see them say hi, how are you. I make sure I acknowledge them."

Customer recognition week is April 2-7